

## Making Strides in Bobcat Alley



**J**ust as important as the number of acres preserved in the name of conservation is the way in which it's done. For example, working with partner organizations and choosing properties carefully can make the most of our collective resources for a bigger impact on a targeted region.

The photo above was taken recently on the Paulins Kill during a site visit to a property we are adding to a greenway that stretches from Route 94 in Warren County to the Kittatinny Ridge that rises above the Delaware River. The Nature Conservancy dubbed this area “Bobcat Alley” because bobcats have regained a tenuous foothold here after almost being wiped out. Bobcats are part of the food chain web of life in our forests, and protecting them also helps the other species that rely on our forests for food and shelter.

Endangered bobcats deserve a space where they can safely interact, hunt and raise their young. But habitat

loss and forest fragmentation continue to challenge their small population, disconnecting them from their historic range and pushing them more frequently into busy roadways.

It is in partnership with Ridge and Valley Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy that we are purchasing another 40 acres in Hardwick. The Land Conservancy of New Jersey has been working in Bobcat Alley for many years, buying up parcels of land to create a connected patchwork of land that will remain a safe haven for wildlife for many years to come. Corridors like this one are essential for wildlife to survive. Animals need to be able to move around safely to find food, shelter, mates, and other resources. Here in New Jersey, wildlife are up against steady urbanization, a dense network of roads, and now a changing climate, all of which put our habitats and wildlife populations in jeopardy. Northwest New Jersey, for example, is intersected by heavily traveled



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## Bobcat Alley, cont'd

roads including I-80, Route 15 and Route 206, which can separate bobcat populations. In fact, Route 15 has the most bobcat roadkills in the state. We have identified an urgent need for a wildlife crossing here, and there may be federal infrastructure funds available for this. We are currently in talks with some partners to make this a reality.

Bobcats are one of the key species the state government had in mind when they initiated the Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey (CHANJ) project, the goal of which is to create tools and resources that will help natural resource managers, transportation planners, conservation professional and universities work together in a more collaborative way to reconnect the landscape in New Jersey. And slowly but surely, the collective efforts are showing results.

This greenway of preserved land now extends from the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and the Delaware River all the way to the Frelinghuysen Forest, which we helped purchase in 2011 and 2014. The property we are about to close on is entirely forested with mature trees and has a wood road that will be great for a future hiking trail. The ultimate goal is for all the region's conservation partners to work together to link this wildlife corridor with 400,000 acres of protected land in New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania.





# FROM MY PERSPECTIVE



Open space means different things to different people. To The Land Conservancy of New Jersey, it means that when we preserve land, we do so for the benefit of all to enjoy. Unfortunately, that doesn't necessarily mean that preserved land is accessible to everyone. That's why we are working to develop a variety of activities and uses at our preserves that can be enjoyed by the widest possible segment of New Jersey residents, including those who don't have regular access to nature.

At our South Branch Preserve, for example, we undertook a large reforestation project and transformed eight former farm fields into pollinator meadows to restore the ecosystem. We reserved the four remaining fields for our partnership with City Green. This wonderful nonprofit partner grows

fresh vegetables to support increased access to and affordability of local food for low-income families in northern New Jersey. In addition, our long-established community garden at South Branch helps locals who don't have the space to plant their own gardens grow food together with their neighbors.

Last year we partnered with the Boys and Girls Club of Paterson and Passaic to educate their students about pollinators—what they are, why they are important to our food system, and why they are disappearing. We grew milkweed seedlings for the children and then took them on a field trip to our pollinator meadow to experience firsthand the great outdoors. There, they planted their seedlings to better understand how they can play a role in solving this problem. When they saw the City Green Farm and picked their own vegetables, it helped them understand where their food comes from.

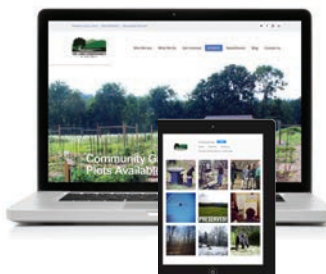
We are now seeking funding to expand this important program to help more children who have limited access to nature learn how important it is, how they can enjoy it, and how they can help improve it. We believe that increasing access to our state's beautiful open spaces is a key component to increasing support for preserving more of these critical but disappearing resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Q. J. [unclear]".

## GET MORE FROM THE LAND CONSERVANCY

If you enjoy this newsletter, follow us on social media and sign up for our mailing list. You'll receive occasional dispatches from the field and learn about conservation issues, our preserves and programs, the people and organizations we partner with, and what we're working on in your area. You can also visit [tlc-nj.org](http://tlc-nj.org) to read our blog.



# Planning Fellows Raise the Bar

Last year we gave our already robust internship program a glow-up by adding two new full-year planning fellowships to individuals with an undergraduate or master's degree who are starting careers in conservation. In this mutually beneficial relationship, The Land Conservancy shares valuable expertise, technology, and relationships for a solid year to benefit these fellows, and in turn they give us a boost with their energy and fresh perspectives.

We are consistently impressed with the quality of candidates the fellowship program attracts—young professionals who jump right into the skilled and detailed work our planning department excels at. Let's meet our newest fellows, Will Parker and Sarah Howe, who are keeping the standard sky-high.

Will earned a bachelor's degree in earth science and environmental studies at Bowdoin College in Maine, then taught English in Germany before joining our team. Along the way he's interned at New Jersey Future, worked in transportation planning and public outreach in Maine—and works Sundays at a pick-your-own orchard. Ultimately, Will aims to get a master's degree in urban planning and continue a career making both cities and countryside lovely.

Will says, "I'm very excited to be working at TLC—I'm really passionate about conservation, planning, and preventing sprawl. I love a good Excel spreadsheet or a dramatic town meeting once in a while, and I especially love maps. I love to learn about local history and hope to work on things related to historic properties. I look forward to discovering more quirky NJ places to visit through work!"

Not to be outdone, Sarah Howe studied urban planning and policy with a specialization in environmental planning at the University of Illinois at Chicago, ultimately earning her master's degree there. Having completed multiple internships regarding sustainability, climate adaptation, and equitable resource allocation, she aims to pursue a PhD in environmental planning, hydrological planning, or climate resilience.



*TLCNJ Planning Fellow Sarah Howe*



*TLCNJ Planning Fellow Will Parker*

Sarah is working remotely from Iowa, but she has fully integrated into the TLCNJ team.

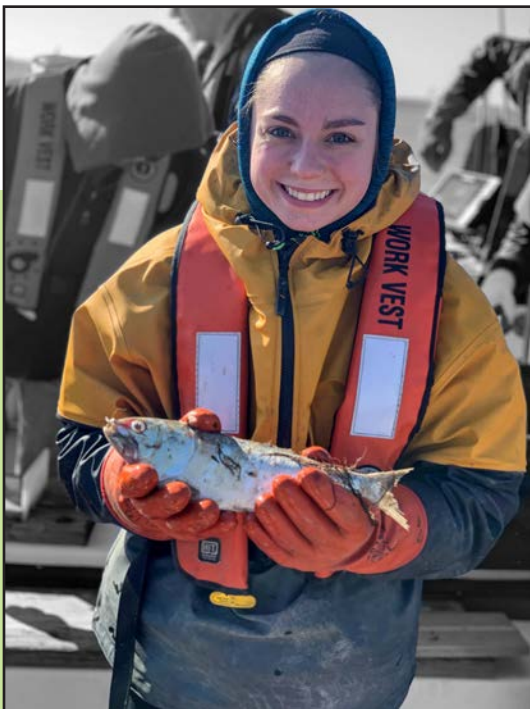
Vice President of Programs Barbara Davis can't stop gushing about the great work of these Land Conservancy fellows: "Working with Sarah, Will, and all of our planning fellows and interns raises the bar on our plans and projects. They bring an energy and enthusiasm to our work. Their passion for the outdoors, protecting land, and engaging people into planning is inspiring. Every day is exciting with them!"



# Raising the Next Environmental Leaders

Are you a college undergraduate or graduate student studying environmental science or a related environmental field? Know someone who is? The Land Conservancy of New Jersey is looking to support future environmental leaders pursuing degrees in environmental science, natural resource management, conservation, park administration, and related fields by awarding five scholarships in 2023.

For 39 years, our organization has been providing scholarships to residents of New Jersey who are pursuing degrees in environmental studies and aim to have careers protecting our natural resources. This year we will be awarding five scholarships thanks to generous gifts from the Leavens Foundation, the Rochkind Wagner Foundation, and an endowment made possible by the Rogers Family and others in memory of former trustee Gray Rogers and TLCNJ founder Russell W. Myers. One student will be chosen for each of the five \$7,500 scholarships. The selection process includes a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. Entries must be emailed or postmarked by March 15.



## FIVE \$7500 SCHOLARSHIPS

Offered by The Land Conservancy of New Jersey to NJ residents studying in environmental fields.

### ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS NOW!

Deadline to apply is **March 15, 2023**. Application and additional info can be found online at [tlc-nj.org/scholarships](https://tlc-nj.org/scholarships)

Our past scholarship recipients have not only achieved academic excellence, but also embody many values of the organization, including leadership and a passion for protecting our natural resources. Danielle, pictured below, just graduated from Stockton University with a double major in marine science and environmental science. She is interested in conserving ecosystems and natural resources, and she has her eye on a master's degree in conservation biology.

***"THIS SCHOLARSHIP MEANS THE WORLD TO ME. NOT ONLY DOES IT LIFT SOME FINANCIAL BURDEN FROM MYSELF AND MY FAMILY, BUT IT ALSO ENSURES THAT I WILL BE ABLE TO GRADUATE THIS YEAR AND CONTINUE DOWN THE PATH TO ACHIEVING MY DREAMS."***

***—DANIELLE DYSON***

# Farewell & Welcome: Changes to Our Board of Trustees

Change is a natural part of life, but that doesn't mean it was easy to say goodbye to a number of Land Conservancy board members in the past few months. Most retired after many years of service but remain devoted to our organization, and we are tremendously grateful for that. One one passed away and will be missed. All of them have helped make The Land Conservancy what it is today.

## **Rick Simon**

Rick Simon was a trustee for 11 years, serving as Vice Chairman, Chair of the Scholarship Committee and as a member of the Finance and Golf Committees. Due to his continuing enthusiasm for The Conservancy's work, Rick will continue to serve on the Scholarship and Golf committees.

## **John Yingling**

Sadly, long-time trustee John Yingling passed away. John served as a Conservancy trustee for 15 years and was active on the Land Acquisition and Finance committees.

## **Albie Booth**

Albie Booth was a board member for 8 years and was an active member of the Finance, Land Acquisition and Development committees. Albie was famous for asking his friends for money to support The Land Conservancy, and they rarely said no.

## **Peter Meyer**

Peter Meyer was a trustee for 25 years and served as Chair of the Scholarship Committee. He was a member of the Land Acquisition Committee as well. Peter introduced The Land Conservancy to many landowners, corporations, donors, and future trustees. Peter set up meetings for us with the owners of the South Branch Preserve for a decade before they relented and sold us the property Peter is retiring to spend more time with his grandchildren, but will remain on the Scholarship Committee and will continue his introductions. In recognition of his long and outstanding service, the Board of Trustees has named Peter a Trustee Emeritus.



*New TLCNJ trustee Andrew Allen*

## **Carolyn Simpson**

Carolyn Simpson was a trustee for 6 years, serving as Secretary of the Executive Committee and Chair of the Governance Committee. Carolyn has retired to spend more time with her grandchildren, but will continue to support the organization in the future.

While we're sad to see these trustees move on, there's good news as well. Environmental consultant Andrew Allen has recently agreed to come on board, and we are looking forward to his contributions and new energy. Here's a little bit about Andrew:

## **Andrew Allen**

Andrew Allen was nominated to the Board in November. Andrew is a Licensed Site Remediation Professional with 17 years of experience in the environmental engineering field. He has worked extensively with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and started his own firm, GKL Environmental Consulting, 6 months ago. He lives in Newton with his wife and three children.



# Volunteers Who Brave the Winter Cold



Winter is traditionally a time of hibernation, but not here at The Land Conservancy of New Jersey! Our staff is always buzzing with farmland preservation, landscape mapping, land acquisition, and so much more.

This February we had a couple of daunting messes at two sites that we are poised to purchase—but we couldn't complete the deals until the properties were cleaned up. We put out a call for volunteers to help us on two different Saturday mornings, and boy, did people turn out!

We always appreciate the help we receive from community members when we need to plant trees, tidy trails, and remove invasives at our preserves. It has been inspiring to see the number of people eager to donate their time grow significantly over the past couple of years. Still, we weren't prepared for the dozens of folks eager to come out on a cold winter morning and to clean up trash and remove debris in order to make these corners of New Jersey just a little bit nicer.

In Hardwick, TLCNJ is purchasing 40 acres to expand Bobcat Alley. You can read the cover article in this newsletter to learn more about this important wildlife corridor named for the bobcats that have regained a tenuous foothold after almost being wiped out. While this property is

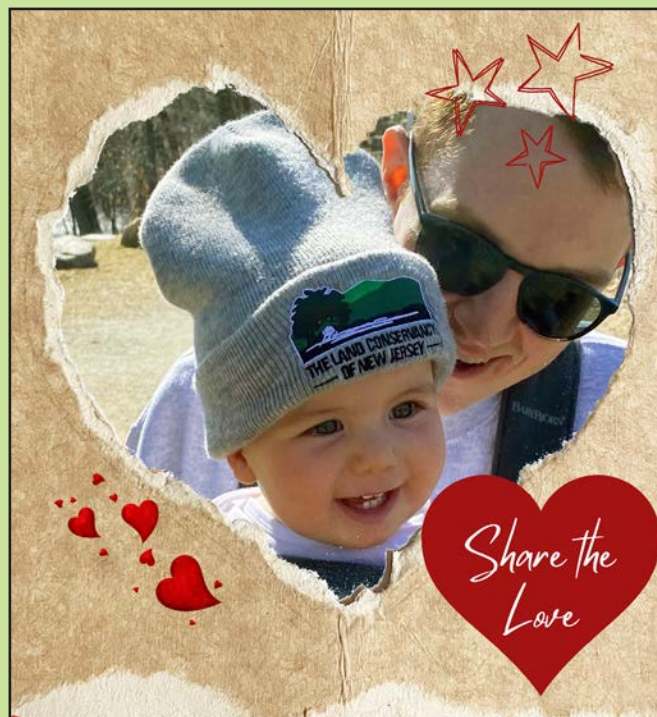
a mature forest with lots to offer, there was a significant amount of debris scattered over a wide area that needed to be hauled away. We asked for ten hearty volunteers and got twice that number! They not only showed up, but also worked hard and were good company.

In the wake of that impressive turnout, we put out another call for the next weekend to clean up 12 acres in Mahwah. This property is about to become a key addition to our Ramapo Mountain Preserve, which links the Ramapo Valley County Reservation all the way north to the New York State border. This land has mature forests and is sacred to the Ramapo Luunape people. We have preserved 107 acres in the Ramapo Mountains so far, some of which we transferred to Bergen County as additions to one of the largest county parks in New Jersey. The rest has become our Ramapo Mountain Preserve.

Once again, the volunteers did not disappoint. Ten people showed up to find and remove chunks of concrete—no easy task! But many hands truly do make light work.

As our volunteer list grows and spring approaches, we remain grateful for this help and excited for what we will be able to accomplish thanks to so many citizens who want to protect the environment as much as we do.

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## SHARE THE LOVE

Two loving couples offered us a challenge: They'll donate \$5,000 to The Land Conservancy of New Jersey once we sign up 20 new sustaining members. We've made it halfway, but we need 10 more people. Will one of them be you?

When you become a sustaining member at any level today, you'll unlock \$250 for our land preservation and stewardship. You'll also get a cozy winter hat with your donation.

Please act today, because this match is almost over!

**[sharethelove.causevox.com](https://sharethelove.causevox.com)**